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I descended into the creek bottoms among the willows, where I found my first magpie nests. These birds were seen about every sheep-herder's camp, subsisting on carrion.

After scanning the sides of a distant range thru my field glasses, I ascended the hills in that direction. As my pony was prancing about, a curlew arose ten feet away, and swiftly winged her course low over the prairie, half a mile in absolute silence. I sprang from my saddle and found a handsome fresh set resting with their points together in a slight cavity lined with bits of grass. In the meantime the parent approached from the opposite direction, uttering her distressing notes of alarm.

These eggs are of the dark green type, shaped long and narrow, and quite different from other specimens of "the sicklebill" which I possess.

An hour or two later while riding thru the sage brush, I espied a sage hen squatting under a bush in typical woodcock fashion, trusting by her protective coloration to escape attention. She permitted close inspection before leaving her nest, revealing nine eggs, incubation one-half.

Five miles away several cottonwoods were growing between rocky ledges. As I neared the place a beautiful fawn-colored hawk sailed from a huge nest composed of dead limbs and buffalo chips. An easy climb—and I was looking down on three well-blotched eggs of the ferruginous rough-leg.

It was getting late in the afternoon so I started for the ranch. In a deep gulch between two divides were several tall poplars; two contained nests. On one the head and tail of a Swainson hawk were clearly visible, outlined against the blue sky. The nest held one freshly laid egg, which I left undisturbed.

Camp was reached in time for supper, and tho a trifle saddle-sore, I felt amply rewarded for my first day's work up the Yellowstone.

*Chicago, Illinois.*

### The Bell Sparrow

BY WRIGHT M. PIERCE

THIS little sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*) is very numerous about here, frequenting the brush-covered fields and low foothills. He seems to prefer the low brush, especially that which grows from one to three feet high, tho he is found, but less abundantly, in the higher sage and thicker brush. This sparrow is a resident about here and can be found at any time in his chosen haunts either on a rainy day in January or on a hot sultry one in July.

I have found many nests of this bird and do not consider them difficult to locate. The method I use is to walk along in the low brush until the bird is startled from the nest, or to simply look in bunches of low brush near which I have located a pair of the birds. In this way I have found as many as half a dozen different nests in an afternoon.

The breeding season commences in early April and continues certainly as late as June. It is at its height during the last week of April and in early May. My earliest set was taken on April 6, near Claremont, and contained four eggs, slightly incubated. On May 18, also near Claremont, I found a set of four, incubation advanced.

The nest is generally placed about a foot up in some small bush, usually being

well concealed. The height ranges, however, from four inches to two feet. The nest is composed of weeds and weed stems, which are exactly the color of the bush in which the nest is situated. It is lined with a little hair or, perhaps, a little rabbit fur, cotton, or plant down. The measurements of a nest before me are:—Inside diameter 2 inches; inside depth  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches; outside diameter  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches; outside depth 3 inches.

The eggs of this species are very prettily marked and show wide variation, some having only a few specks of reddish brown, principally on the larger end, others being marked with large blotches, perhaps all over, but more generally on the larger end only. These blotchings are intermixed with the smaller, finer markings. I have seen some eggs that have only a few markings, but I have never seen any eggs entirely without markings. Out of the numerous sets that I have discovered I have never seen more than four eggs in a nest. This is the usual complement tho we rarely find only three.

*Claremont, Cal.*

## NEWS NOTES

A news note in *Science* for October 26, 1906, announces the death of a condor belonging to the New York Zoological Park and valued at \$300. This fine bird had lived healthily in the Park for two years, and the cause of its sudden death remained a mystery until an autopsy was held. It was found that a large rubber band, presumably administered by some visitor, had lodged in the pyloric orifice of the stomach, completely closing it, and arresting the entire process of digestion. Such exasperating occurrences as this have compelled the Zoological Society to forbid the feeding of animals by visitors.

Mr. J. H. Bowles spent the early part of the past summer east of the Cascades, and obtained much new information for his and Mr. Dawson's forthcoming "Birds of Washington."

Lieut. F. B. Eastman is stationed for the winter at Fort Egbert, near Eagle, Alaska. This is 65 degrees north latitude, and yet is in a region of relatively abundant bird-life. We hope Mr. Eastman enjoys his winter's experience among the boreal birds; for they are welcome and sociable acquaintances in that remote region, as we ourselves have reason to know.

The manuscript for Part IV of Ridgway's "Birds of North and Middle America" is completed, and is now in the hands of the government printer. We hope there will be no delay in the publication of this important work.

Malcolm P. Anderson is at last accounts (August 23) collecting with good success on Saghalien Island, north of Japan.

Mr. W. W. Brown has gone to the Cape Region of Lower California, where he will collect in the interests of Mr. John E. Thayer.

Mr. R. C. McGregor continues to explore various small Islands of the Philippine Archipelago. Under date of August 27, he writes that he has just finished Bohol, getting 140 species of birds, where there had been only 55 recorded before.

The *American Bird Magazine* ("American Ornithology"), published by C. K. Reed of Worcester, Mass., has suspended publication owing to difficulties in the way of securing second-class postal rates.

The Bryant collection of mounted hummingbirds, nearly 200 in number, was purchased by Mr. John E. Thayer, and becomes a part of the Thayer Museum at Lancaster, Mass.